

# **Inquirer and Candidate Evaluation: The Milwaukee Model**

*Prepared for the Milwaukee Presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry- by David Henderson, Ed.D*

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## **Introduction**

In September of 2001, I attended a conference on evaluation of candidates for the ministry, presented by the Ministry Development Center of the Southwest, in Ft. Worth, Texas. Twelve denominations were represented from across the US and Canada. Central to the presentations and discussion was the increasing need to more thoroughly evaluate potential candidates for the ministry. Attendees left the conference with the foundation for a new paradigm for evaluation, which with considerable modification, is presented in this paper.

Since 2001, this paper was revised on four occasions, twice the assistance of Milwaukee CPM members. In addition, the committee participated in three full committee retreats, has a fourth scheduled for the fall of 2005, conducted one Clearness Committee type of meeting with a candidate, and conducted four full day retreats for eight Inquirers. The journey we began in 2001 is well underway, with many satisfied travelers.

## **The Current Situation**

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry of the Milwaukee Presbytery is working with an increasingly diverse group of Inquirers and Candidates. Ages range from the early twenties to the late 50's, second career men and women are more the norm than the exception, our ethnic mix is broadening, and we are attracting more and more ordained pastors from other denominations. The trends seem to be increasing. What was once a somewhat predictable and proscribed process, has become a stimulating, and at times challenging, journey for inquirers, candidates, and committee members.

While demographic changes drive functional committee changes, so do changes in those institutions that touch upon the role and function of the Committee. In the past, local churches, and at times, seminaries, served to provide the direction needed for the personal spiritual formation necessary to effective pastoral function and growth. That once clear direction now seems to be murky or entirely absent from the map.

### **The Local Church**

Over time, and with changing demographics in people coming forward seeking ordination, the role of the local church as the center of spiritual formation has gradually diminished, as has the developmental role of seminaries. Where once a pastor or session could guide the spiritual development of inquirer/candidates, the demands of jobs, family, education, and other responsibilities of pastors, elders, and inquirer/candidates, makes that traditional role nearly impossible. The practical demands on the lives of all involved often leaves the inquirer/candidate without the support and direction needed for appropriate spiritual formation.

### **The Committee on Preparation for Ministry**

Sadly, more than a few ordained ministers report their CPM experiences as “horrible,” or “a power trip by some of the good old boys,” or “I was nothing but a number to them, they were too busy to really get to know me.” Others report the need to carefully edit what they said to the CPM, taking care to not sound unsure about theology, call, human relations, and God’s role in their lives. CPM was not a place for growth or development, but rather the holder of the keys to the gate, a series of hoops to properly jump through on the path to ordination. Rarely was a CPM experience reported that was positive.

In the July 1999, General Assembly Council survey, “Ministers Ordained in the 1990s: A Look at Clergy Who Have Left the Ministry,” the CPM experience is reported as “helpful or very helpful” by 47% of those ministers serving in a validated call and by 34% of those not currently serving in a validated call. The numbers are more troublesome when the negative side is reported. Fifty-two percent of clergy serving in a validated call report their CPM experience as “slightly helpful or not helpful at all,” while

59% of clergy not currently serving in a validated call view their CPM experience as “slightly helpful or not helpful at all.” Clearly, the CPM experience has an impact on future clergy retention in the Presbyterian Church and the result is sadly negative.

### **Seminaries**

To compound the situation, most seminaries are academic institutions with little time or predilection for fostering spiritual growth or personal development on the part of their students. A notable few offer a course or two with spiritual emphasis. While academics are dear to Presbyterians, we are very much in need of furthering pastoral spiritual growth and formation, as well as emotional maturity.

Human relationships are the daily business of an active involved pastor, and human relationships are the downfall of many pastors who are emotionally and spiritually immature. Todd W. Hall, in an article in the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, comments on relational deficits and seminary education.

The interpersonal theme throughout this research points to the importance of pastors dealing with their relational deficits. This is not traditionally a focus of seminaries. Although there is some improvement in this area, it remains a substantial gap in traditional seminary training. Pastors typically take only one to two counseling courses throughout their seminary training. Furthermore, there is a lack of emphasis on relationships in general, and especially on understanding one’s self and developing in the area of relational maturity. Ironically, the very thing that is emphasized the least in seminary can be tied to almost every problem the research indicates is prevalent among pastors (e.g. burn out, sexual misconduct, unrealistic expectations, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, loneliness, isolation, and poor marital adjustment). (Hall, Todd W. “The Personal Functioning of Pastor: A Review of Empirical Research with Implications for the Care of Pastors,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1997, p. 252.)

To offset this deficit and to prepare inquirer/candidates for effective, spirit filled ministry, the CPM has the unique opportunity to not only challenge and nurture future pastors, it can do so while carrying out its traditional and important role of loving gatekeeper.

Attention to potential problems with Inquirers/Candidates needs to begin earlier rather than later, when it is more difficult to address them. It is easier and more useful to all involved to face spiritual questions, theological concerns, and emotional development issues early on, when time allows the marshalling of more resources, rather than late in the day, when both the committee and the candidate can be left with lingering questions after a hasty intervention. Early action by a thoughtful caring committee will assist Inquirer/Candidates in spiritual formation and emotional maturity, especially at the beginning of seminary education, when stress is high.

Harbaugh and Rogers, writing in the *Journal of Pastoral Care*, note

Educationally, such high levels of stress and anxiety as appear among entering students, if not appropriately addressed, may actually impede the learning process. Another critical time to address stress, and learn from it, is with seniors upon their return from internship. After seminarians graduate, bishops and judicatories would be well advised to provide preventative guidelines and pastoral support during the early years of ministry, particularly the first year. Psychologically, transitional periods are not only times of “danger,” but also real opportunities for personal and professional awareness and growth.

(Harbaugh, Gary L. and Rogers, Evan, “Pastoral Burnout: A View from the Seminary.” *Journal of Pastoral Care*. 1984,pp. 104-105.)

The CPM model described in this paper is designed to provide to Inquirers, Candidates, and CPM members adequate time and a process to satisfactorily address most spiritual and developmental issues raised during the years of relationship with the committee. The model generates early knowledge of potential problems and provides opportunities to appropriately address issues as they arise.

### **Mental Health**

Lastly, pastoral mental health, little regarded in the past, is coming to the fore through loss of young pastors and personal, professional, and legal difficulties brought by inappropriate pastoral behavior in the local church. What was once ignored or swept under the rug is now the stuff of heated congregational conflict, law suits, and occasional headlines.

For pastors, depression and narcissism top the list of mental health problems. While major depression and dysthymic disorder lends itself to a wide variety of interventions, including psychotherapy and medication, narcissism is a personality disorder that is difficult to address because most narcissists are not able to understand that they have a problem, much less do anything about it. While depression enters many lives at one time or another, narcissistic pathology does not, and is often the result of a difficult childhood which leads to a more difficult adulthood. The CPM model described below allows a committee to discern problems early in its relationship with an Inquirer/Candidate and seek appropriate resolution.

A gap or space, like a slowly opening crack in a piece of fine wooden furniture, has developed in a once functional CPM process, leaving many of those involved missing critical developmental elements. The missing elements are the spiritual formation and emotional nurture and maturity necessary for effective ministry in an ever more complex world.

### **Gate Keeping**

While the Committee on Preparation for ministry can do little to change the demographics of those seeking ordination, or add more time to the lives of busy pastors, session members, and inquirer/candidates, it can change how it functions and relates to inquirer/candidates, local churches, and seminaries.

The gate keeping function of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry is critical to the spiritual, emotional and fiscal health of the Presbyterian Church. Without adequate standards of education and theological competence, the Presbyterian Church would lose its identity and soul. The Committee is charged with the overall evaluation of candidates prior to certification for ordination by the local presbytery. The CPM is the group that assess all of the data about an inquirer/candidate and finally says “yes,” or “no.” The gate keeping role has never been more important.

### **Introduction to the Milwaukee Model**

Central to the Milwaukee Model is the notion of the faith journey for both the Inquirer/Candidate and CPM members. For the Inquirer/Candidate, the journey begins with a stirring or awakening in the soul of a sense of mission or call. Eventually, that stirring brings the person to the CPM as either an Inquirer or Candidate. The CPM then joins the journey both as gate keeper and spiritual guide, questioning, assessing, supporting and nurturing the person up to ordination. While under care of the CPM, the Inquirer/Candidate can be expected to develop intellectually, emotionally and spiritually to the point when ordination is appropriate. Along the way, smooth and rough spots can be expected, but the responsibility for quality of the journey is a joint effort between the Inquirer/Candidate and the members of the CPM.

Included in the journey, for both the Inquirer/Candidate and the CPM are long discussions of the person's vocational identity, including family/life history, faith identity, and call. Critical to the process is the willingness of the CPM members to answer for themselves the same questions that will be put to the Inquirer/Candidates. If the Inquirer/Candidates are expected to be authentic and open with the committee, it is incumbent upon committee members to model the behavior they expect from their charges.

The journey does not end with ordination or termination of the relationship with the CPM. Rather it is expected that the faith journey is a life long, leading to many developmental treasures and dead ends. Perhaps the path is like the labyrinth of Chartres, with a clear central end, but with many sharp turns on the path? Regardless, in the Milwaukee Model, the CPM is a guide for part of the life journey, and will perhaps contribute to all of the journey. Time and experience will tell.

### **The Milwaukee Model**

The model described below is holistic. It is designed to allow Inquirer/Candidates and CPM members time and opportunity to know one another at an intimate level, making the gate keeping function of the CPM more effective. The increased time needed for CPM

work pays off in higher quality decisions, both on the part of the CPM and on the part of the Inquirer/Candidates. Inherent to the proposed model is a conflict, a dilemma, for the CPM and Inquirer/Candidate. Well framed and used, the dilemma can deepen personal insight and temper judgement; ignored or poorly addressed, frustration, anger, and cynicism can result. The proposed model is people dependent, requiring more time, risk taking, and commitment from both the CPM and those who are called to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

### **The Dilemma**

Inquirer/Candidates are placed in an ambiguous position with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Currently the CPM functions mostly as a gatekeeper and uses a varied and loosely structured process to gather data for Inquirer/Candidate assessment. Included are brief personal interviews, annual update meetings, feedback from Clinical Pastoral Education experiences, psychological assessment provided by an outside source, personal relationships with the Inquirer/Candidates, and usually random unsolicited feedback from field work, seminaries, and the local church. While the process is not highly structured, it has worked fairly well in the Milwaukee Presbytery. But, as our Inquirer/Candidate pool changes, so must the process.

In the paradigm described in this paper, a more difficult ambiguity, indeed a dilemma, is presented to the Inquirer/Candidate. **The Milwaukee CPM is charged not only with being the gate keeper to the professional ministry, it is also charged as the principal guide in the spiritual formation of the Inquirer/Candidate in question.** At first glance, the Inquirer/Candidate seems to be placed on a loosely tensioned tight wire where a wobble or mis-step could lead to a hard fall, and serious, if not fatal injury. At some times, in some presbyteries, the above was, and perhaps continues to be true. The Milwaukee paradigm, however, suggests a different outcome.

The role of the pastor in local church situations is frequently unclear, sometimes conflicted, and often ambiguous. S/he is often confronted by situations replete with conflict, emotional confusion, breached boundaries, and colliding interests; a situation

much like the wobbly wire above. How the Inquirer/Candidate resolves the dilemma of roles presented by the Milwaukee paradigm is an opportunity for the Inquirer/candidate and CPM for assessment of the emotional and spiritual maturity of the person in question. It is likely that the dilemma presented by the apparently conflicted Committee roles will, in retrospect, be good training for situations and dilemmas that are sure to follow. The Milwaukee paradigm presents this dilemma as an opportunity.

### **The One Day Retreat**

After the initial CPM meeting contact, the Inquirer/Candidate will meet with selected CPM members for a one day retreat designed to allow CPM members and the Inquirer/Candidate time and space to explore the question: Should this person begin the process of seeking ordination for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament?

*(See: Presbytery Team Discernment, and Conversations between Travelers on the Journey: Greeting and Meeting)*

*Anticipated Outcomes:* CPM members begin to learn and understand the core narrative of the Inquirer/Candidate; they get to know one another and provide a beginning answer to the central question. Further, they begin to learn and assess the emotional, spiritual, and personal developmental stages of the Inquirer/Candidate.

*Committee Process:* Based on material submitted to the CPM, the one day retreat is designed to answer questions developed by the committee. The central question, stated above, will guide the discussion. At the conclusion of the retreat a summary statement is prepared for the confidential file of the Inquirer/Candidate. The summary content is agreed upon by all present, including the Inquirer/Candidate.

### **Committee Interaction**

Regular meetings with the Inquirer/Candidate are necessary, minimally one meeting each year, with other involvement by the committee liaison and or individual sub committee. The committee liaison makes every effort to meet with the Inquirer/Candidate at least two to four times each year. Meeting time is used to explore, guide, coach, and nurture the spiritual growth of the Inquirer/Candidate. Time is also used to discuss ongoing



education, spiritual direction, and academic growth. The committee inquirer/candidate relationship is intended to be healthy and appropriately intimate.

*Anticipated Outcomes:* On going committee interaction is heart of this model. As relationships mature, the opportunity for mutual challenge and growth surfaces. With the guidance of agreed upon learning objectives, committee members and the Inquirer/candidate together embrace challenges, creating learning experiences that support spiritual formation and personal maturity.

*Committee Process:* With a positive outcome from the one day retreat, the Inquirer/Candidate enters into a multi-year relationship with members of the presbytery CPM. During the course of those years, through a process of ongoing discussion, interviews, retreats, writing assignments, and other experiences agreed upon by the CPM and the Inquirer/Candidate, all persons involved develop a deeper more thorough knowledge and understanding of one another. As the process unfolds, CPM members and Inquirer/Candidates have ample opportunity to discover gifts and graces, strengths and weaknesses, points of joy and places of pain, providing the experiences and information necessary for insightful, reverent, and mutual decisions regarding the progress and finally suitability for ordination of each Candidate. The gate keeping function of CPM is clarified, and its decisions are far more informed.

### **Clearness Committee.**

From time to time, and at request of either the CPM or Inquirer/Candidate, a meeting of CPM or of individuals mutually agreed upon, come together as a Clearness Committee to assist the Inquirer/Candidate in answering a question or settling a personal, professional, or spiritual issue. The committee members shall only ask questions of the Inquirer/Candidate, seeking to bring insight and answers from within. Clearness questions and topics are selected by those calling for the meeting. This committee function is intentionally modeled on the Quaker Clearness committee structure and process.

**Example:** The candidate has clear gifts for a wide variety of ministries, but an academic career at the college or university level and local parish ministry seem to be competing for his time and talents. He describes his local church field work as “life changing, compelling,” and “full of richness and meaning.” He also feels powerfully drawn to an academic career, in part catalyzed by “joyful and exciting” research and writing experiences and considerable success as a visiting instructor at a local college. He passed all of his ordination examinations with the highest grades and is prepared for certification as ready for ordination. Both the CPM and the candidate have questions about what direction he should take or what path he should pursue. Almost simultaneously the committee and the candidate decide that more clarity is needed. Together they choose the Clearness Committee process.

A Clearness Committee composed of CPM members and others (about five persons) is assembled and the key question is designed. In the case above, it will center on call and vocation, with emphasis on academics, local church ministry, and/or another option. The key question will be available to CPM and the Clearness Committee at least one week prior to the Clearness meeting.

At the meeting, committee members will ask questions designed to assist and guide the candidate in finding a clear answer or set of answers to the key question. Committee members cannot give advice. They can only ask questions. The meeting can last from one hour to more than six hours, depending upon the circumstances. The meeting can be adjourned and reconvened if all are in agreement. A record of the meeting outcome is kept by the CPM.

### **Clinical Pastoral Education**

In addition to the above, each Inquirer/Candidate participates in at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at a certified site agreed upon by both the Inquirer/Candidate and the Committee.

*Anticipated Outcomes:* At the conclusion of the CPE unit, it is expected that the Inquirer/Candidate will have a more developed understanding of the clinical setting, a

working knowledge of hospital based chaplaincy or other care facility, and a more clearly developed and defined sense of self.

### **Internship**

A one year internship in a local church or organization similar to potential employment after seminary graduation is advisable. While an internship is not required for ordination in most presbyteries, based on the very positive feedback from candidates who have served as interns, the requirement should be considered. The internship should be funded by the site organization commensurate with the work required for satisfactory job performance.

*Anticipated Outcomes:* A far greater awareness on the part of the candidate of the varied demands of his or her chosen field of ministry. Spiritual, emotional, and professional development will be substantially enhanced, deepening the personal discernment process while providing practical work experience. Further, feedback from the internship site staff will contribute to informing the CPM in its relationship with the candidate.

### **Ordination Examinations**

The Milwaukee CPM, consistent with the *Book of Order*, requires that Candidates pass the Bible Content Examination and the five ordination examinations administered by the Presbyteries Cooperative Committee on Examination of Candidates. When candidates fail any examination the CPM makes every effort to provide coaching to the candidate in the needed subject areas.

If a candidate who is otherwise qualified, fails an ordination examination more than once, several CPM members review and assess the candidates written examination and offer assistance when appropriate.

Should an otherwise qualified candidate fail a written examination three times, permission is sought from the presbytery to offer an alternative examination, often a verbal examination, by two CPM members and three presbyters not on the CPM.

The above practice is not intended to pass unqualified candidates through, but rather to recognize that people have different learning styles and some persons do not do well on written examinations, while a verbal examination demonstrates command of the subject matter. The Milwaukee CPM will propose a written examination policy to the full Presbytery latter in 2005.

### **Spiritual Direction**

Within three months of becoming an Inquirer, a spiritual director is identified for the Inquirer/Candidate. The match between the director and the Inquirer/Candidate should be mutual, with clear expectations of the relationship expressed in writing and on file with the CPM. It must be kept in mind that the relationship between the spiritual director and directee (inquirer/candidate) is one of absolute confidentiality. Any communication between the spiritual director and the CPM should be on an as needed basis, and only with the written permission of the directee.

Further, a portion of the total hours devoted to guided spiritual direction should be in a group setting, with a trained leader. Again, absolute confidentiality is assumed. Cost for all of the above is to be negotiated between the inquirer/candidate, the CPM and the providers involved.

### **Psychological Assessment**

Each Inquirer/Candidate will, at a time that is mutually agreeable (preferably in the first year of care), participate in a thorough psychological assessment at a facility chosen by the Committee. Results of that assessment are made available to both to the Committee and to the Inquirer/Candidate. Cost for the services are shared between the Committee, the Inquirer/ Candidate, and his/her local church.

*Anticipated Outcomes:* Psychological assessment is necessary for all involved. It is expected that the assessment process will provide a wide range of clinical and non-clinical information for both the Inquirer/Candidate and the CPM. Information derived

from the assessment process is confidential, and is to serve as only one of many elements in the overall evaluation of an Inquirer/Candidate.

### **Other Experiences**

From time to time, for the benefit of the Inquirer/Candidate, s/he may be invited or requested to participate in educational experiences of the Committee's choosing. Clear rationale for the request must be present and the Inquirer/Candidate fully informed of the educational outcomes expected from the experience.

### **Assessment and the Recommendation for Endorsement**

In the role of gate keeper, the CPM is required to assess readiness for Candidacy and finally say "yes" or "no" to moving a Candidate forward for endorsement for ordination to the ministry of word and sacrament. The decision for endorsement by the CPM is not to be based on any one of the above requirements or experiences, but rather on all of the information gathered from all of the above requirements and experiences taken in aggregate. It is a holistic process entered into with the full involvement of CPM members, the Candidate, and the Holy Spirit, with the final decision derived from shared experience, information, and prayer.

As the relationship between the Inquirer/Candidate and CPM develops, an ongoing conversation will emerge about the Inquirer/Candidate's suitability for ordination to the ministry of the word and sacrament. The desired outcome from this paradigm is a shared understanding between the CPM and the Candidate as to the progress and advisability of continued candidacy or certification as ready for ordination. Endorsement or non-endorsement is intended to be a mutual decision, prayerfully developed over time by the Committee and the Candidate.

In the event of non-endorsement, the Milwaukee CPM has a continued obligation to continue its relationship with the candidate until mutual termination is agreed upon. This continued relationship is intended to assist the Candidate in making decisions regarding his/her next steps. The Clearness Committee can be useful at this juncture.

**Committee Selection**

Given the task and process of the Milwaukee CPM and the capacity for personal connectivity necessary for effective committee function, CPM members likewise must be willing and able to function in what is best described as an emotionally intense, spiritually challenging, intimate human experience. Further, committee members will, from time to time, be required to invest long hours in discussion, interviews, and those experiences necessary to develop open trusting relationships amongst themselves and between themselves and one or more Inquirer/Candidates.

Because of the unusual demands facing committee members, committee selection becomes a task of considerable significance. Without willing and able committee members, the process described will be at best frustrating, and will consume far more time. Committee selection is critical to CPM success.

With the above in mind, a close, on going, working relationship with the Presbytery nominating committee is necessary. In addition, committee perception by members of presbytery is critical, for they will greatly influence the willingness of already busy people to give more of themselves in this important task.

To date the Milwaukee CPM does not lack for members. Rather, we have an increasing number of pastors and elders asking about committee membership and our moderator and vice-moderators are known long before the nomination process is complete. Further, Milwaukee CPM members frequently identify the CPM as their “faith home.” What was once a difficult committee to staff, is now a committee that is sought out for membership.

**Committee Training**

To increase the probability of successful committee outcomes, committee training is necessary, for both continuing and new committee members. With each new class of committee members, orientation training is needed, along with clearly focused ongoing, formal and informal, committee continuing education. The content and the time of

committee training is decided by the committee members themselves based on mutually agreed upon desired outcomes.

For most, CPM membership is purely voluntary, with time contributed out of a sense of purpose and gratitude. In an effort to compensate CPM members for their time and energy, some benefit is advisable. Through the use of this proposed paradigm, abundant opportunities for spiritual and personal growth for all CPM members is available, and becomes one of the motivating factors for those seeking committee membership.

### **Time and Committee Size**

Because of the more individually intense relationships between CPM members and Inquirer/Candidates necessary for The Milwaukee Model and because these relationships require far more one on one time, the size of the CPM should be linked to work demand as well as polity considerations.

To achieve this personnel balance, it is advisable to develop a small pool of trained committee members who move on and off of the committee as the Inquirer/Candidate pool warrants. Trained, past CPM members are used in this role in the Milwaukee Presbytery as well as new members who are subsequently trained. Past CPM members serve as liaisons when appropriate.

Further, time requirements for retreats with Inquirer/Candidates occasionally places heavy demands on CPM time. Rather than full committee participation in all Inquirer/Candidate retreats, selected committee members lead and participate in individual retreats, reporting their experiences to the full committee. Full committee participation in agreed upon full Committee retreats, meetings, and other activities is necessary. The stewardship of time is critical to committee function and success.

### **Committee Relationships**

Central to the effective function of the CPM using the Milwaukee paradigm are relationships with its various constituencies: The local churches, the presbytery, and the

various seminaries that are educating the Inquirer/Candidates under the care of the committee. In all cases, clear, open channels of communication must be developed and maintained by the committee for the purpose of gathering necessary information to be used in the overall individual developmental plan and evaluation of Inquirer/Candidates.

*The Committee and the Local Church:* At least once each year each CPM liaisons meet with the sessions of the Inquirer/Candidates under care. During the visit the conversation focuses on the spiritual and emotional development of the Inquirer or Candidate. Notes from the meetings, describing the gist of the conversation, including strengths and weakness of the Inquirer/Candidate, are kept in the CPM file for the person in question. Every effort is made by the liaison to encourage session members to continue to seek out and identify individuals with potential for ministry.

*The Committee and the Presbytery:* The committee, on a regular basis, keeps presbytery up to date on its activities and discussions, inviting feedback and support. The Milwaukee CPM will report its full process to the Presbytery in the Fall and Winter of 2005-2006.

*The Committee and the Seminaries:* The committee informs seminaries where Inquirer/Candidates are students of its operating model. Emphasis is placed on our focus on spiritual formation, with questions to the seminary contact about local developmental programs. Further, committee members attempt to visit seminaries in their travels, seeking to learn more about how students are educated. The CPM keeps an up to date library of Presbyterian seminary catalogues as well as catalogues from seminaries where it has students.

### **Our Journey to the Present**

The Milwaukee CPM began the process with one year of preparation through discussion and three CPM retreats, held about 3 months apart. The CPM hired an outside retreat leader who worked with us for the year leading and guiding our committee retreats.



We began cautiously with a Saturday morning gathering where we prayed, sang, and introduced ourselves in beginning depth. The second retreat was one day in length, using a similar format, but with discussion in greater depth. The final preparation retreat was one weekend in length, again using a familiar format of prayer and song, but with guided discussion on pre-arranged topics. Over the course of the retreats, the personal relationships on the CPM gradually deepened and conversation about difficult topics became more open, thoughtful, and informative. At end of the third retreat we agreed that we were ready for the next step, bringing inquirer/candidates into a structured retreat process in which we lead and participate.

Since the beginning the retreat model, the CPM has conducted four one day retreats for Inquirer/Candidates. Two more are scheduled for the fall of 2005. The response by CPM members and Inquirer/Candidates has been over whelmingly positive. Some things we have learned:

- Schedule one day for the retreat and stick to the schedule;
- The retreat, as currently structured, can only deal with two Inquirer/Candidates in one day, answering three of the proposed retreat questions. Time does not permit more participants beyond the two Inquirer/Candidates and two CPM members;
- The retreat leader should be a CPM member familiar with leading retreats/groups, but who does not participate in the retreat beyond leading the experience; dual roles do not work here;
- Expect deep personal sharing and tears from all participants;
- Maintaining confidentiality is critical;
- The retreat experience can be shared with the CPM in a general sense only;
- Have nutritious snacks, coffee, tea, juice, etc., available at all times;
- Provide a comfortable place and room for the experience;
- Use silence and prayer, generously;
- Always trust the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Be open to surprise!

Our CPM members and Inquirer/Candidates are vocal in their thoughts and feelings about their Committee experiences:

- *This experience has changed my life!*
- *Other seminary students can't believe how this works;*
- *Thanks for being with me on this journey;*
- *The one day retreat was eye opening and powerful;*
- *The retreat changed my life;*

- *I never thought a presbytery committee would be like this;*
- *I am slowly learning how to pray;*
- *I'm not afraid to ask hard questions of the committee. Other seminary students tell me they have to be very careful about what they say and what they ask;*
- *This committee is my faith home;*
- *Thank you for standing by me through the difficult times.*

The list gets longer as time and experience develop.

## **Taking the Model Home**

### **How to Begin?**

Begin with a series of retreats for CPM members. Use an outside, trained retreat leader who is briefed on what the process is about. Take the time to know one another as committee members and be willing to take risks with each other.

After the committee believes it is ready, begin the one day Inquirer/Candidate retreats with one or two current Inquirers. Ask for their cooperation and patience.

Simultaneously, committee members should begin to answer the questions found in Wayne Menking's document on candidate evaluation. The question and discussion process should be a regular part of each CPM meeting.

A retreat model similar to the one described in *Presbytery Team Discernment*, or *Conversations Between Travelers on the Journey: Greeting and Meeting (attached)*, should be scheduled for the willing first Inquirers, and all committee members should be present for at least one of the events.

### **Committee Size and Budget**

The Milwaukee Model, as described above, has not caused an increase in Committee budget, nor has it made member recruitment more difficult. Rather, our budget remains stable and elders and pastors are now coming forward requesting to be elected to the committee.

For larger presbyteries with many more Inquirer/Candidates, the CPM has the option to break into small subcommittees, with Inquirer/Candidates assigned to the subcommittees for the purposes of liaison and retreat functions. The larger CPM can use a modified retreat design for its own formation and training prior to bringing Inquirer/Candidates into the process. Critical to the process, however, is a strong level of trust among CPM members. While the CPM retreat and Inquirer/Candidate retreats will serve to bring a contentious committee together, members of the committee must first be willing to take the risks necessary to trust others on the committee.

Finally, any CPM can use this model. It can be adopted as described above or modified to fit the needs of the presbytery and CPM. Central to the adoption is the strong desire to make the care process just that: The experience of caring for all of God's people.

Keep in mind that change is both exciting and difficult. Organizational inertia is powerful, sneaky, and seductive. The familiar often seems better, especially when the change brings initial stress and discomfort. The French proverb applies well: *Plus ça change, plus c'est même chose*. The more something changes, the more it remains the same.

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Attachments:

*Conversations Between Travelers on the Journey: Greeting and Meeting*, a first retreat for Inquirers/Candidates and CPM members, by David Henderson

## **Conversations Between Travelers on the Journey: Greeting and Meeting**

*A first retreat for Inquirers/Candidates and CPM members*

*Gifts, graces, and cautions to start the journey*

Sitting in a circle, we open with prayer. Each person share something about why you are here...and then invite someone else to share until all who are willing have spoken.

One person chooses and then slowly reads one of the two scriptures below. After about five minutes of silence, each person describes a word or phrase that stands out to them and upon completion, invites another to share until all who are willing have spoken.

### **Luke 10:1-12, I Corinthians 12:1-26**

The scripture is slowly read a second time by a person of the opposite sex of the first reader. After five minutes of silence, each person is asked to think about and answer the question: *How does this scripture apply to my life today?* Each person, after answering the question, invites another to share their answer.

### ***Thoughts and questions for the road***

**Each person, by invitation, answers the following questions in #1. One person asks each question slowly, for all of the group to hear. After about ten minutes of silence for note taking, one person begins answering the question. Upon completion s/he invites the next person to answer until all who are willing have answered. After all have answered, allow time for an open discussion of the question and answers.**

**1.** What is your family story? Parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins...Who are the key people? What were the significant events? What was your role in the family? How does that role influence what you do and how you are today?

**1a.** How did your family of origin deal with controversy? Hard times? Good times? What was the role of honesty in your family? Where did (does) God fit into the life of your family of origin? If your family of origin were an animal, what animal would it be and why? A question formed by the group....

**After each person has answered question one and an open discussion is completed, repeat the process of question one, answering question #2.**

**2.** Describe your faith experience using a story or metaphor or both. What events or persons have shaped your faith? How?

**2a.** When do you feel most intimate with God? When do you feel most separate from God? Why and how? What attracted you to the Presbyterian Church? What is most attractive about it now? What really puts you off or angers you about the Presbyterian Church? A question formed by the group.....

**After each person has answered question two and an open discussion is completed, repeat the process of question one, answering question #3.**

**3.** Describe your sense of call. Who is calling and what is the call to? When and how did your call emerge? Use non-religious language as you do this. How do you know your call is authentic?

**3a,** What is your mission at this time of your life? How is your mission fulfilling to you? What really turns you on about being alive? A question formed by the group.....

**After the group has completed answering questions 1, 2, 3, and concluded an open discussion, return to the near top of the page and chose a question from #1a, using the same process used to answer questions 1, 2, 3. After answering a question from 1a, proceed to 2a and then on to 3a. Repeat the process until 3:15 PM.**

***We say Goodbye with Hello in it: Shalom***

We close with prayers for each person in our group. One person begins by praying for the person on his/her left, who then prays for the person on her/his left until we complete the circle. Then we stand and say the Lord's prayer.

***Travel itinerary***

After coffee at 8:30 AM, we will begin our adventure with brief introductions and prayer, followed by reflections on the verses noted above. After a break we will continue our travels with guided conversation on some of the topics above. Somewhere, about noon, we will eat lunch while continuing our conversation. After lunch we will continue our journey, closing with thanks and prayer at 3:30 PM.

***Travel Protocols***

- All discussion content is confidential. It remains in the group,
- Feel free to not answer a question. "I pass," lets the group know the question is not for you.
- Do not try to convince, convert, or change opinion or feelings of others in the group. Respect the thoughts and feelings of each speaker.
- When moved to ask a question, do so thoughtfully with clear intent.

*-David Henderson*